

Meeting Minutes, 10/18/06

Committee for Citizen Involvement

CCI Members Present: Rex Caffall, Sue Carver, Basil Christopher, Bev Froude, Kelly Johnson, Brian Kelly, Cecilia K. Nguyen, Bill Scheiderich, Stacie Yost

CCI Members Absent: Rick Parker

Staff Present: Marissa Daniels, Sean Farrelly, Liz, Newton, Duane Roberts,

Guests Present: Susan Stark Haydon, Gerri Mitagyow

1. Welcome and Introductions

Committee Chair Basil Christopher called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes

Basil asked committee members to forward any September meeting minute emendations directly to Duane. *[None received]*

3. Outreach to Pacific Island Community

Gerri Mitagyow began her presentation with a recap of her personal history. She was born and spent her early years in Micronesia. She moved with her family to the Portland area, under a compact with the USA that allows “free immigration”. She attended high school in Hillsboro and recently graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in marketing. She presently resides in the Metzger area, as do many recent Micronesian immigrants.

She noted that Tigard’s Pacific Island community is in need of information on available resources and educational opportunities. Truk is the biggest Pacific Island group represented in Tigard. She would like to get involved in helping the Micronesian community in some way.

Brian commented that Gerri could play an important bridging role in helping the City to understand the needs of the Pacific Islanders and in helping the Islanders to feel connected to the Tigard community.

Susan Stark Hayden commented that the Tigard schools provide specialized programs for Pacific Islanders, many of whom are behind in school because of language difficulties.

Basil asked Gerri about English competency among Island youth. Gerri responded that most Pacific Island students learn basic English in their island schools.

Stacie asked how the City could best connect with Pacific Islanders. What outreach information do the Islanders most need? Gerri replied that a lot go to the library and that

Metzger Park is a popular gathering spot. Volleyball is a popular activity. Islanders tend not to socialize with others and to not get involved in community activities.

Susan Stark Haydon commented that, after Latinos, Islanders make up the largest ethnic group in the school districts' English as a Second Language classes.

Kelly commented that there are both cultural and linguistic differences between sub-groups within the overall Island community.

Marissa agreed with Kelly and added that, as a recent University of Hawaii student, she observed that students belonging to particular Island ethnic group tend to identify and associate with their own sub-groups.

Gerri pointed out that, in addition to a lack of a common identity, in some cases, there may be rivalry between various Island groups. Historically, this lack of identification and rivalry is related to the significant distances between the islands that make up Micronesia. The Micronesian national identity is artificial. Residents of one island do not necessarily feel any connection with the residents of another island.

Cecilia pointed out that an immigrant community's biggest challenge is to figure out how to create a social network. People who have resided in America the longest are the key players in helping new arrivals. An immigrant group needs a network of people who can speak English and can disseminate essential information to new arrivals. Families who have been here a long time can help new families with such things as getting drivers licenses and applying for public assistance.

Susan mentioned the school district's interest in assisting Island families.

Rex pointed out that Truk Islanders usually have connections to churches and that these churches are a good place to network. A possible strategy would be finding out the main churches to which families belong and then working through those churches. This is one way to initiate a two-way dialogue between Islanders and the Tigard community. After identifying a network of people who know about available services, the next step would be organizing a cultural fair to bring people together and provide available information.

Rex asked how many island people read the Tigard Cityscape. Gerri answered that very few do so.

Basil asked Gerri if she could come back to the next CCI meeting and also if she would consider becoming part of the CCI group, saying her insights could help the Neighborhood Program succeed. Brain pointed out that Metzger is one of the three pilot programs.

Kelly asked about outreach programs that have proven successful in other jurisdictions. She mentioned that she would talk to the park board at its meeting next week about sponsoring a cultural festival.

Susan commented that she would talk to the Metzger Elementary principal about how the school can improve its outreach efforts.

Rex suggested hiring a PR firm to train people in effective outreach.

Basil concluded the discussion by stating that this agenda item would be continued to the next meeting.

4. Tigard-Tualatin School District Communication Policies

Susan Stark Haydon, the School District's public information administrator, gave background on the school district's policy regarding the distribution of printed material provided by outside groups. The basic question she asks in deciding whether to allow a handout's distribution is, "does the material help the kids?" Any activity promoted should relate to the district's mission, be of general interest, and be affordable.

Under this policy, a soccer league sign-up announcement would qualify. But a flier advertising private piano lessons would not. This is because the district would not know anything about the private teacher's background.

Basil commented that the distribution of City-prepared material through the schools is a potentially useful way to disseminate information. He asked if the district would be interested in hosting or sending information home with students regarding a possible City-sponsored candidate forum.

Susan responded that what she called "library level" information, or information that meets the test of being factual, would be okay.

Basil noted that the CCI is interested in learning about different ways to share information in the community. The schools appear to be a potential resource, and this is important to know.

Susan noted that the approval of material for distribution does not require much lead time. Turnaround is normally quick.

Bev asked about the approval process. Susan replied that her assistant reviews and approves most materials. Liz informed the group that the City limits the materials it asks the district to send home to things families are likely to be interested in seeing.

Basil asked for examples of unsolicited handout materials turned down by the district. Susan cited handouts that "make money for someone."

Basil pointed out that the City, along with receiving assistance from the district, is in a position to reciprocate by disseminating school district information. Information on kids potentially could go out to the community through the new Neighborhood Program.

Sue discussed last year's CCI Latino panel and suggested that the minutes of this meeting be forwarded to Susan. *(The minutes were emailed to Susan, as requested.)*

Rex noted that St. Anthony's Church had acted as sponsor for a large number of immigrants.

Cynthia commented that networking involves providing help within the community.

Rex pointed out that immigrants struggle with culture and food differences. In addition to help within the immigrant community, County satellite health and social service offices are needed at this end of the County.

Susan commented that the first wave of Vietnamese immigrants consisted of well educated families. In contrast, many recent Latino immigrants have less literacy in the family. Some students arrive without being able to read and write in Spanish.

Cynthia commented that the more culturally advanced the newcomers, the more easily they are able to adapt to life in America.

Susan explained that the school district doesn't just stick new arrivals in regular classrooms, or mainstream them, as it were. The district's policy is to transition its new students into the regular curriculum by providing an initial period of instruction using Spanish.

5. Council Feedback on Neighborhood Program

Liz reported on her recent meeting with Council to discuss the Neighborhood Program. She stated that she explained to Council the CCI's reservation about the program. Council is enthused about the use of the web to facilitate the program. She would like to work with the CCI to look at web design. Tom Coffee, the Community Development Director, has suggested that Liz consider instituting a "neighborhood master planning program" as part of or at the same time as the Neighborhood Program startup.

Tom agreed that Neighborhood Program land use liaisons could be allowed to participate in pre-application land use development meetings.

In November, Liz will conduct a city-wide town hall meeting to get more people to weigh in on the content of the program. Some 160 people have indicated interest in attending such a meeting. Liz intends to update the CCI around the first of the year.

Basil asked when the program will reach full implementation. Liz responded that progress has been slow because the program is web-based, and the City webmaster position has been vacant for some months.

Basil asked if Liz had talked to Council about getting school kids involved in providing web assistance. Incentives could include class credit or work experience. Liz identified the Youth Advisory Council as a potential resource for student web assistance.

Kelly asked about the idea of a webpage for cultural groups. Liz stated that a neighborhood page could include links to neighborhood ethno-specific groups. This could be used as a way to initiate an ethnic page.

After three unsuccessful recruiting efforts, Liz announced that the still vacant City webpage position will be restructured to include a focus on the webpage itself and to eliminate code writing, which had been included as part of the job description previously.

6. Downtown Code Amendment Outreach

Sean gave a briefing on proposed changes to zoning standards within the Downtown Urban Renewal Area. The changes include design guidelines to regulate the appearance of new development. Public involvement in developing the new regulations included input from stakeholders. Two open house meetings with property and business owners were held. A second phase of public involvement will take place in February and include stakeholder focus groups, an open house, and formal public hearings.

Bev asked about the effect of the new regulations on developed properties. Sean responded that they will apply to new development only. Expanding a building will trigger the new code provisions, but existing, non-conforming buildings will be “grandfathered”, and not otherwise affected to the new regulations.

Sean further explained that the Downtown Plan envisions the retention of the older buildings on Main in order to preserve the street’s existing character.

Kelly asked about the initial reaction of business owners to the proposed changes. Sean stated that he was unsure of the answer to this question. Rex asked whether arrangements had been made to contact absentee owners. Sean indicated that efforts had been so made.

7. Other Business/Announcements/Next Agenda

Basil asked Gerri to return to next month’s CCI meeting to continue the dialogue on Island outreach, and she agreed to do so.

A discussion of job descriptions for volunteer positions followed. Several members commented on the need for more upfront information about volunteer positions within the City. This should include information on the time commitment involved, job details, and whether children would be allowed to accompany an adult or participate in an activity.

The group decided to invite Bob Roth, the City Volunteer Coordinator, to the November meeting to help brainstorm ideas for preparing the job descriptions. One idea is to have volunteers write a description of what they do. Another idea is that project managers could write the description.

Bill brought up the CERT program. Neighborhood Program recognition requires a certain number of CERT-trained persons. Is there a city-wide plan to train people?

Another suggestion was a progress report from Jim Wolf on planning for the drug awareness workshop discussed at the October CCI meeting.

Basil announced that no meeting will be held in December.